Dishwasher Encyclopedia Article

Dishwasher

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Contents

Dishwasher Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Dishwasher.....3

Dishwasher

The first patent for a mechanical dishwashing device was granted in 1850 to a man named Houghton from Ogden, New York. His wooden contraption splashed water on dishes. In 1866, Josephine Cochrane of Shelbyville, Indiana, built a dishwasher in her home. Her interest in developing tools that would ease the labor of household chores extended beyond dishwashing machines, and she established one of the first kitchen equipment companies in America. Cochrane worked diligently on her dishwashing machine but was unable to invest enough time and money into its commercial production. After her husband's death, she began commercial production of her machine with financial help from friends. Cochrane's first two models were both hand-operated and ultimately proved as tiring as washing dishes by hand. However, Cochrane built improved models for home and hotel use. Her larger machines were powered by a steam engine and were capable of washing hundreds of dishes in two minutes. The modern Kitchenaid dishwasher is the descendant of Cochrane's early machines. In 1911, the first motor-powered dishwashing appliance was developed. The first practical dishwasher for home use was marketed in 1932. Despite the fact that the average daily time spent washing dishes was sixty-eight minutes, the machine was not in great demand. Early machines, designed for restaurants and hotels, passed dirty dishes under jets of hot water on a conveyor belt. Modern machines operate by mechanical arms that rotate and spray water on dishes placed in stationary wire baskets. Machines draw in cold water and heat it; the average home dishwasher uses approximately 3.5 gallons (13.2 l) of water heated to 140° F (60° C). An entire day's dishes can be washed in one load. The dishwasher dries the dishes by circulating hot air, thus condensing moisture. In Seattle, Washington, in 1962 Kelvinator demonstrated a dishwasher that used neither soap nor water. The machine relied on high-frequency sound waves to clean dishes but proved too costly to develop on a mass scale. Newer dishwashers remove soil without hand rinsing, an energy saving boon.